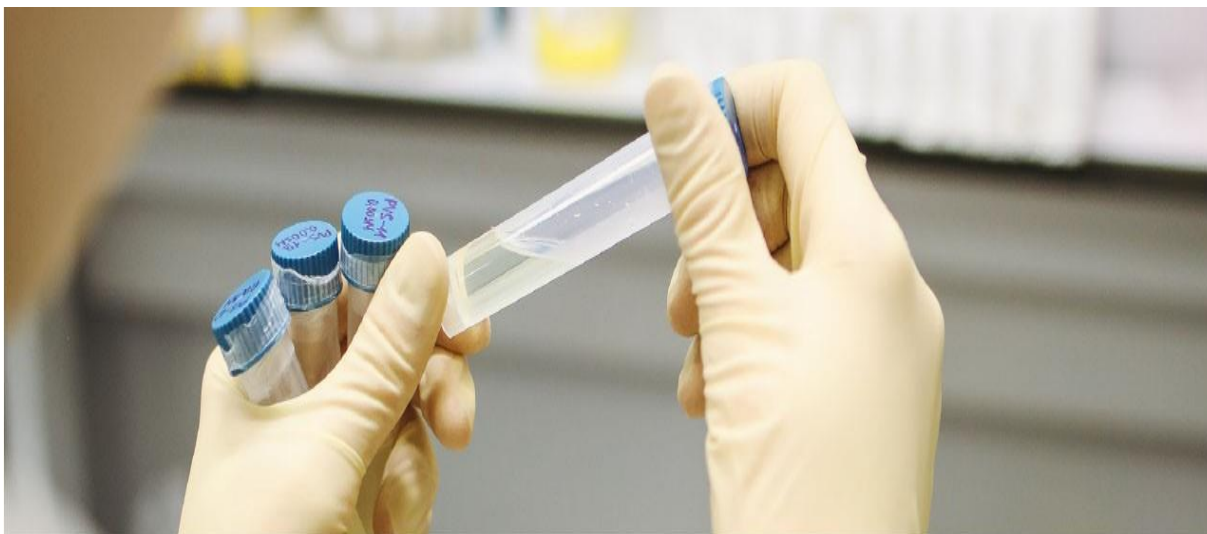


## Understanding COVID-19 and its Spread



### Resources about the disease

Coronavirus refers to a family of viruses. COVID-19 – or Coronavirus Disease – is the infectious disease caused by a newly discovered type of coronavirus.

As the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has set out, most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

Common symptoms include fever, tiredness and a dry cough. Other symptoms include shortness of breath, aches and pains, sore throat, and very few people will report diarrhoea, nausea or a runny nose.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

To find out more about the virus, see the WHO's [research pages](#), or the [Massive Open Online Courses \(MOOCs\)](#) on the virus prepared by the WHO. You may also wish to sign up to the [WHO's WhatsApp alert](#) in order to receive trustworthy information directly to your phone.

### Resources about latest cases

National authorities around the world are working to gather information about numbers of tests, infections and consequences. You should turn first to your national authorities for this information, as they should have the most recent data.

At the global level, the WHO is releasing [daily updates](#) on the situation. This information is used to build the WHO's [dashboard](#) on cases.

The Centre for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University is also maintaining a [global map live](#), including figures on numbers of recovered patients. This is being used regularly in media reporting.



### Library closures around the world

Libraries around the world are facing hard choices around which services to offer and how, ranging from minimal restrictions to full closure. We are aware that governments themselves are taking different approaches, sometimes ordering the closure of all institutions, others indicating that life should continue as usual, and others simply leaving decisions up to library directors.

Clearly any decision to restrict services or close a library is a difficult one and needs to be taken following an assessment of the relative risks.

We are currently aware of entire public library systems being closed in the following countries and territories: American Samoa, the Aland Islands, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium (with some pick-up services under obligation from by government), Bermuda, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, the Cayman Islands, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, the Faroe Islands, Finland, France, French Polynesia, Germany, Ghana, Gibraltar, Greece, Greenland, Guadeloupe, Guernsey, Hong Kong (China), Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Italy, Jersey, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Martinique, Mauritius, Moldova, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Saint Lucia, Saint Martin, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Sint Maarten, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Svalbard, Switzerland, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine the United Kingdom and the United States Virgin Islands. In the meanwhile, libraries in Macao (China) are beginning to re-open with precautions in place to protect health.

Inside the United States, Ithaka S+R is monitoring actions in research libraries (see [live results](#)). Meanwhile, school libraries in 188 countries will have been affected by the closure of all educational institutions, while in others, at least some schools have been closed, according to figures from [UNESCO](#). In many of these, university libraries are also closed.

**National libraries** too have closed to the public in Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Bermuda, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, the

Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Colombia, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Greenland, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, the Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, the Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Caledonia, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay.



#### Managing different approaches to restrictions

Libraries in different parts of the world are facing very different situations, from broadly maintaining a full service to complete closure.

Drawing on experience around the world, libraries and librarians are finding themselves in one of a number of situations:

**Business (more or less) as usual:** in many countries, cases of the virus have been limited and governments have not taken any specific measures. Nonetheless, normal recommendations around good hygiene apply. In this situation, libraries are, for example:

- Ensuring access to soap and warm water
- Ensuring they have a supply of hand sanitiser
- Keeping surfaces clean, including toys and library computers
- Ensuring that staff and users are encouraged to take time to recover if they are feeling ill, rather than coming
- Providing pages with useful links to reliable information for users on their websites and promoting media literacy faced with potential misinformation online.

**Some restrictions:** there are more cases, and governments are beginning to act in order to limit larger events, as well as actively encouraging people to take extra measures to protect hygiene. In this situation, libraries are, for example:

- Reconsidering programming such as storytimes or workshops, especially for groups at risk such as older users. Additional efforts to ensure hygiene, including through disinfecting hard surfaces. Removing riskier items such as toys or virtual reality headsets from circulation.

- Considering whether to close study spaces where people may spend a longer time in the company of others.
- Preparing for potential further restrictions, for example by ensuring that all staff have the skills and tools to work remotely (if this is possible) and that services, as far as possible, can still be provided digitally.

**Minimal service:** in many countries there are stricter measures still, with tougher limits on public gatherings, specific warnings for people at risk, and closures in the most affected regions. In these situations, libraries are, for example:

- Fully closing spaces and only offering the possibility to borrow or return books at a counter, or via a book drop. Some countries are experimenting with drive-through pick-up and return of books. Others are only allowing visitors who have pre-booked.
- Implementing quarantine policies on returned books (see below for further details).
- Implementing plans to offer remote services for example eLending, eLearning, or support to remote teaching
- Finalising and testing measures for all staff to work remotely and allowing those who can to do so already.

**Full closure:** where measures are strictest, libraries have either been forced to close, or have chosen to do so following consideration of the risks to users and staff. In these situations, libraries are, for example:

- Ensuring that all staff working from home unless completely necessary. Where staff are coming into work, ensuring that they can do so while respecting rules around social distancing
- Librarians are being reassigned to other duties in other departments within their municipalities, for example using information management skills to support health and social services
- Providing ongoing communication with users about opportunities to use library resources or services
- Organising digital story-times where copyright permits
- Promoting use of digital libraries and other tools - including potentially investing in more content/licences
- Offering an amnesty on borrowed physical books, and increasing the number of eBooks users can borrow
- Making library spaces and equipment available for other activities, such as printing personal protective equipment